

THE RADICAL EXPERIMENT

MATT. 9.35-38

I don't think that any one of us would deny that 2010 was a momentous year for our church.

It was certainly a time for trial, but I believe also that you have proven your faithfulness to Christ, to His church, and to this fellowship of believers.

Even though last year was a trying year, it was also a very rewarding year.

Ann and I became more and more aware of how much you care for us, and we know that we are privileged to be part of a fellowship with the heart that you have.

It was a year of learning. Some of what we learned was admittedly difficult and, to some, more than they could comprehend. As a result, our fellowship is much smaller than it was at the beginning of 2010.

I have people ask me, "How's your church going? Is it growing?"

I respond by saying, "Yes, though not as you might be thinking. Our numbers have decreased through the year, but those who remain have made grown spiritually and have proven their growth by their commitment to the mission of our church."

But we have grown, and I think two studies greatly contributed to that growth.

1. ***Experiencing God***, by Dr. Henry Blackaby, which re-emphasized the concept that God is in control of everything – that He is the One who initiates every relationship with man – that we should not get caught up in seeking God's will for ourselves, but in seeking God's will period and then getting involved where He is already working.
2. ***Radical***, by Dr. David Platt, which called our attention to several truths that we had forgotten or misunderstood.

I believe the book actually has the wrong title. The actual title should be called *Normal*, because it talks of how things ought to be among Christians and in the church compared to how things are.

The disparity between the two is so great, that the difference is, in fact, a radical difference. And to live the way God called us to live requires a radical change of mind.

Radical made several claims throughout the book.

- Real success is found in radical sacrifice.
- Ultimate satisfaction is found not in making much of ourselves but in making much of God.
- The purpose of our lives transcends the country and culture in which we live.
- Meaning is found in community, not individualism.
- Joy is found in generosity, not materialism
- Truth is found in Christ, not universalism.
- Ultimately, Jesus is a reward worth risking everything to know, experience, and enjoy.

In verse 35, Jesus modeled what He requires of us by the Great Commission.

- ***Jesus went about all the cities and villages***

The key word is that He went. He did not stay around His own town and His own people. Making disciples requires that we go.

- ***teaching in their synagogues***

He met them in the synagogues, which is where they would assemble by habit. In other words, Jesus went to where the people were already used to going. He did not require them to come to some place that they were not used to.

- ***preaching the gospel of the kingdom***

If we had time this morning, we would study what this word means in depth.

Most Christians think in terms of the “gospel of grace” or the “gospel of salvation.”

Ephesians 1.13 refers to “the gospel of your salvation.” And Acts 20.24 uses the phrase “gospel of the grace of God.” The Bible also refers to the “gospel of peace” (Rom. 10.15; Eph. 6.15).

The word most often translated “gospel” is the word *euangelion* from which we get our word evangelism. Of the 74 or so times this word is used in the NT, it makes reference to the “gospel of Christ” (12x), the “gospel of God” (7x), and the “gospel of the kingdom” (4x).

The point is that the gospel message is the good news about God and Jesus and the kingdom. Possibly the earliest use of the word gospel was by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15.3-6.

Simply put, the gospel is about Jesus. Of course, what are the rewards of understanding the message of the gospel of Christ? They are grace, salvation, and peace.

- **healing every sickness and every disease among the people**

Jesus did not just go to meet their spiritual needs, but He addressed their physical needs. It is most likely that a starving man will be more open to your witness when he has had something to eat.

Verse 36 lets us know that Jesus was driven by compassion. It is what made Him go and teach and endure the hardships of the mission – because He cared more for the people He was ministering to than He did His own comforts.

In Matthew 10, Jesus will give His disciples relatively detailed instructions for carrying out the mission that He has called them to. But the first thing He called on them to do in **Matthew 9.38** was to pray.

Notice that Jesus did not instruct the disciples to pray for the harvest – for the results of their labors – nor did He instruct them to pray for those who were the object of the mission, although I

am sure that there is nothing wrong with praying for both of these things.

But Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for laborers who would go and gather the harvest that He was creating.

Why is this prayer so essential? Jesus was concerned that those who called Him lord would not be obedient to His command to go to all the nations.

Jesus is the One who saves, but He works through those who obey Him.

When we look around us and see a billion people who have never heard of Jesus – when we look around us at our own culture with its attitude toward the things of God of apathy at best and antipathy or hatred at worst – we should not be surprised.

But when we see the church not engaged in reaching the world around her and with an attitude of carelessness in the carrying out of the mission of God, then it should call us to pray.

David Platt said that the church has settled for “Bible lite”?

What he meant by that is that the mass of Christians are satisfied with prepared daily devotions, with reading their Sunday School books, listening to a sermon on Sunday morning, and with a minimum of time spent in devotion to God and study of His word.

We are far too easily satisfied and thus we have little to no impact on our world.

To understand how important it is for us to go – to be personally and actively involved in missions – think back to how you were brought into the kingdom of God.

You may have come simply as a result of reading the Bible on your own, or reading a tract, or because you watched a TV preacher and were convicted to confess Christ as Lord.

But if we were to survey most Christians we would find that most of us came to know Christ as Savior as the result of the intervention of another person who cared enough to share the Gospel message with us.

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And if they had not done so, where would you be today?

Think of the call to missions in another way.

What was God's primary method of demonstrating His grace to the world?

He could have just given us the written word through visions and dreams of particular men who had no other experience than hearing angels speak.

But that is not the way that God works.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

God did just what He calls us to do – He personally came to us in the person of the Christ Jesus, the Son, to dwell among those He sought to save. And today He dwells within us personally in the person of the Holy Spirit.

God is a personal God and His mission is a personal mission. The Christian cannot separate himself from the responsibility of involvement without being intentionally disobedient.

Going on missions is not a calling; it is a commandment.

If we are serious about answering God's call to missions and being radical in our commitment, we must look first at our own lives and how we apply the resources God has given us to use in the carrying out of the mission. We should see our income and our careers as "platforms for proclaiming the gospel" around the world."

If we are serious about being successful in our growth as disciples and our service as missionaries, we also need to

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assess how do we view the role of the church in our development and success.

Everyone who claims the promised salvation of God must recognize that they are called by God to live and to work within the community of the church.

In the church you should find "support and encouragement to live out your intention to be radically abandoned to Jesus."

We are to work together, pray together, and study the word together, because "We need community in order to follow Christ radically."

(Read first paragraph, p. 206, Radical.)

To accomplish the mission God has set before us we must work together and make a commitment to...

- Give liberally
- Go urgently
- Live dangerously
- Pray desperately

it is time to determine if we are ready to make a commitment to participate in God's plan of carrying the gospel message to all people groups, even to the ends of the earth.

Over the next year, you are called to commit to...

1. Pray for the entire world
Operation World
2. Read through the entire Word
Reading plans available in hallway
3. Sacrifice your money for a specific purpose
Faith Promise
4. Spend your time in another context
 - Jerusalem

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- Rushton's Hope
- Mobile Church
- VBS partnership with New Mercy BC and Pastor Grady Caldwell
- Meeting w/ 2nd BC leadership about possible partnership to get a Sunday night program initiated
- Judea/Samaria
 - Kevin Riley, International Church, Clarkston, GA, to work with different people groups
 - FRBA, youth-related trips to places in Georgia and other parts of the US
- Ends of the Earth
 - Keith Haywood, OM, plan for an overseas trip
 - Lebanon or Syria to work with Muslim outreach
 - Russia to teach English using the Bible

5. Commit your life to a multiplying community

For us to be successful in carrying out these missions plans for 2011, every member must take an active part.

Missions projects require project champions. I cannot plan and carry out all of these goals by myself. That means that you will need to step up and choose the project that you are most passionate about.

If none of these projects fit your gifts and talents, then propose another alternative and we will definitely give it consideration.

The only limitation we have in fulfilling the mission of the church is our faith and reliance on the provision and guidance of God, and our faithfulness to the fellowship of our church.

On that note, let me end this morning by talking very briefly about our new church name.

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Most of you know the process we used to come up with a name. Some of you who suggested names may be disappointed that your suggestion was not chosen. I pray that will not be a stumbling block to your support of our church and its mission.

The name that you selected by a very significant margin was **TRUE LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH.**

There are several reasons why I believe this is the appropriate name for our church and I hope to make it clear to you over the next several Sundays.

The name is based on the text from John 14.6 where Jesus said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me."***

That verse will be the text for the messages over the next three or four weeks as we continue to look at God's vision for our church.

The picture of the tree in the name represents the life of the Christian...

- Founded (or rooted) in Christ
- Formed in Community (the trunk and the leaves or fruit)
- Focused on the Mission (shown by the arc which represents the outline of a globe or the world)

Finally, one of the questions that was asked almost as much as "Where are you located?" is the question "What kind of church are you?"

So, we included the reference to Baptist in an additional line.

Technically, we will be **TRUE LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH**, although most of the time I am sure we will be referred to as **TRUE LIFE CHURCH.**